

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A data storage system having a plurality of terminal apparatuses of users connected with a data storage unit of a service provider via a computer network, said data storage unit storing data from inside said terminal apparatuses so that the stored data are subsequently used by said users, said data storage unit comprising:

connecting means for connecting said data storage unit of said service provider with said terminal apparatuses of said users via said computer network independently of types of said terminal apparatuses;

file storing means for allocating to each of said users a user area of a predetermined size in which to store data from inside the terminal apparatus of the user in question;

file managing means for managing the data being stored in said file storing means; and

data format converting means for performing a data format converting process on the stored data in said file storing means;

wherein, in response to a use request from any one of said users, said data format converting means converts stored data in said file storing means into a format

compatible with the type of the terminal apparatus used by the requesting user for connection to the system, the converted data being used by said terminal apparatus through which said requesting user has sent said use request.

2. A data storage system according to claim 1, further comprising data disclosure controlling means for managing use conditions under which said stored data in said data storing means are allowed to be used;

wherein said data disclosure controlling means enables the data for which said use conditions have been set to be used by users other than the user who stored the data in question into said data storing means.

3. A data storage system according to claim 2, further comprising announcing means for announcing that the data for which said use conditions have been set are usable by the users other than said user who stored the data in question into said data storing means.

4. A data storage system according to claim 3, wherein said announcing means makes the announcement to a specific user other than said user who stored the data in question into said data storing means.

5. A data storage system according to claim 3, further comprising intercepting means for establishing

interception of the announcement from a specific user either in response to a request from another user before said announcement, or after said announcement.

6. A data storage system according to claim 2, further comprising recording means for recording settings of said use conditions and a history of uses by the other users of the data for which said use conditions have been set.